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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 002338

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DOD FOR USD(P) EDELMAN AND ASD RODMAN  
NSC FOR MORROW  
DEPT FOR EAP A/S HILL, EAP DAS JOHN, S/CT CRUMPTON,  
EAP/MLS, INL  
PACOM FOR FPA (HUSO)

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: THE WAY AHEAD IN SOUTHERN THAILAND

REF: BANGKOK 002337

Classified By: AMBASSADOR RALPH L. BOYCE. REASON 1.4 (B,D)

11. (U) ACTION REQUEST. Post requests inter-agency approval for the proposals in paragraph 6.

12. (S) Summary. The violence in the South of Thailand remains a serious problem for the RTG and a threat to U.S. interests. As outlined in ref, in the last two years we have shifted a significant portion of our wide ranging training and assistance programs to help our longtime ally meet this challenge. The RTG response--which will be outlined in septel--remains undercut, however, by poor security force capabilities, rampant stove-piping, and the lack of an effective prosecutorial-police partnership. Post has designed a new aggressive, inter-agency plan to refocus our assistance, combat these shortcomings and help the Thai win the fight in the South. End Summary.

NOT A QUESTION OF WON'T, BUT CAN'T  
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13. (S) As outlined in septel, over the last two years the RTG has overcome its previous state of denial and realized that the South is in trouble. Nearly 45,000 security forces are now trying to stem the insurgency in an area the size of Connecticut. The Thai have set up coordinating bodies, such as the Southern Border Provinces Peace Building Command (SBPPBC) and the National Coordinating Center for Combating Terrorism and Transnational Crime, among others; however, these new structures have been so far unable to significantly improve coordination. While the RTG has not been shy about pouring resources into the troubled provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat, the capabilities of the security forces to combat an insurgency--or to even pursue basic investigations--remain poor. Rampant stove-piping, a lack of basic skills, and poor relations between police and prosecutors have led to few arrests and almost no convictions of suspected insurgents. The lack of an effective security force response has further alienated southern Muslims and invites potential human rights abuses. Moreover, this lack of demonstrable progress further emboldens the insurgents and adds to their ranks. We must continue to encourage efforts like that of the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) to build dialogue and understanding, but without basic security, there is no chance for meaningful political change.

WE CAN (AND SHOULD) DO MORE  
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14. (C) Ref outlines the assistance we have been providing to the Thai in an attempt to improve their baseline capabilities to meet this challenge. We have avoided being dragged into this conflict and in doing so, have avoided conflagrating an internal Thai problem. We can do more, though.

15. (C) Mission agencies have come together to discuss the way forward. Tapping into our wealth of law enforcement, military and political expertise, we have determined that our excellent military-to-military assistance program is on the right track. The Thai police, however, remain the weak link in the southern security apparatus. We have identified four areas that demand immediate attention:

--A central, single coordinator to ensure that our wide range of law enforcement training is fostering institutional change in the Thai security forces and improving their capabilities in the South.

--An appropriately experienced individual to foster a true police-prosecutor partnership, particularly in the South, that leads to arrests and convictions.

--New comprehensive training that provides Thai officials in the South with both basic and advanced investigative and counterterror skills, while encouraging them to work with their counterparts in other agencies.

--More direct USG engagement with senior Thai officials to push them to improve internal Thai coordination and cooperation.

#### THE WAY FORWARD

16. (C) With these needs in mind, Post has developed the following proposals and requests Washington inter-agency approval to move forward. All of our efforts will have a particular focus on addressing the critical problems in the South. However, we cannot treat half of the patient. In order to achieve institutional change, some of our training and programs will include participants from other parts of the country, particularly Bangkok, where overall policies are set. They are:

--Establishment of a U.S. DOJ ICITAP position in Bangkok. This Senior Law Enforcement Advisor (SLEA) would coordinate the full range of LEA training and assistance and ensure that these efforts are focused on improving Thai performance in the South. Post already provides a significant amount of law enforcement training (INL, ATA and others) but it has not coalesced into a coordinated program that fosters system-wide improvements. The SLEA would push to improve the institutional capabilities of Thai law enforcement agencies and foster organizational improvements as well. We have discussed this option with a Washington ICITAP representative, and DOJ may be able to provide such a person in the next few months.

--Refocus our existing OPDAT Resident Legal Advisor (RLA) on improving southern police-prosecutorial performance. Rather than waiting for a new officer to fill this pressing need, we propose using our current RLA's three years of experience and contacts here in Thailand to immediately begin work on this fundamental obstacle to success in the South.

--The Narcotics Affairs Section (NAS) and International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) have developed an innovative new training program to improve Thai capabilities in the South, but we need additional funding to expand and continue this program. Starting this year, NAS and ILEA will train a first class of 60 officers from the range of Thai agencies--including the military--in everything from basic investigative techniques to more advanced counterterrorism strategies. All 60 of these officers are assigned to the South. Besides improving individual performance, we have designed this course as a first shot at breaking down the institutional stovepipes in the Thai system. Joint training will foster the kind of people-to-people contacts that are so important to breaking down institutional boundaries.

--Finally, we propose using the visit next month of EAP DAS Eric John to begin a more aggressive engagement with senior RTG officials on improving policy and performance in the South.

17. (C) We are confident that these proposals mark a serious step forward in our efforts to help the RTG meet the challenge in the South, while maintaining the public distance demanded by the nature of the conflict.  
BOYCE